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ABSTRACT

The model developed for this paper describes procedures for obtaining job relevant data for a needs assessment of principals' competencies to determine the discrepancy between their actual and desired performance. The major components of the model include selecting a committee to oversee the process, completing a job analysis, identifying and weighting required job competencies, measuring actual and desired performance, compiling and presenting needs assessment results, developing alternative procedures, validating professional development needs, and developing the program. A committee of five persons is selected from individuals with varying points of view regarding expectancies for the principalship, with expertise in competency identification. Job function identification yields a list of five to ten broad job functions. Based on these functions, a list of competencies or determinants of job performance is produced. The needs assessment survey is designed and implemented to provide supporting data and feedback on the identified competencies. A Quadrant Assessment Model is recommended to complete and present the results. The relationship between ideal competencies and the perceived relative priorities as expressed by practitioners is derived to establish job competency priorities. A comprehensive professional development program can result from this process. (JEH)

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A PRESCRIPTIVE MODEL FOR DETERMINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF PRINCIPALS

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A PRESCRIPTIVE MODEL FOR DETERMINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF PRINCIPALS

> Basically, a model is a symbolic representation of the various aspects of a complex event or situation, and their interrelationships. A model is by nature a simplification and thus may or may not include all the variables. It should include, however, all of those variables which the model builder considers important and, in this sense, models serve as an aid to understanding the event or situation being studied.[1]

A model serves many purposes: it enables those involved to conceptualize the multiple factors through visualized thinking; visualization in turn improves the capability to perceive and, therefore, assists the cognitive process; it also is representative of a process; it is both graphic and schematic; and it is both prescriptive and guiding.[2]

Models have frequently been used to represent objects, events, processes or systems. They have been categorized in a variety of ways including: graphic, pictoral, mathematical, simulation and schematic. Their functions have been classified as: descriptive; representative; guiding; visualizing; operational; predictive; and prescriptive.[3] The purpose of the model developed for this paper is to provide educational organizations with a graphic and schematic portrayal of a process which prescribes the logically derived procedures necessary to guide such organizations in the implementation of the process. In addition, the model provides the means for establishing an operational process by which further research may attempt to validate both the use of the process and the assumptions upon which it is founded.[4]

An analysis of literature was used to develop the model which could be applied in any school district. A description of activities required for development of the model include:

1. Development of a procedure to select a committee to oversee the process.

2. Development of a job analysis technique to identify the job functions of the principalship in the district.
3. Development of a procedure to identify and weight the competencies required for performance of the identified job functions.
4. Development of a procedure to measure actual and desired performance level of principals for specified competencies and preferred delivery systems for professional development activities.
5. Description of a procedure for compilation and presentation of needs assessment results and identification of professional development needs.
6. Development of an alternative procedure to identify professional development needs.
7. Validation of professional development needs.
8. Development of the professional development program.

The model developed for this paper describes procedures for obtaining job relevant data related to a needs assessment of principals' competencies to determine the discrepancy between their actual and desired performance. The major components of the model are identified in Figure 1.

To clarify the starting point for the model, it is necessary to assume that certain decisions have been made by the Board of Education including:

1. Commitment to professional staff development for principals through the provision of an adequate budget.
2. That gathering and reporting data to identify professional development needs will be the responsibility of a specially selected committee.
3. Resultant data will be communicated to incumbents and is not to be used as part of evaluation.

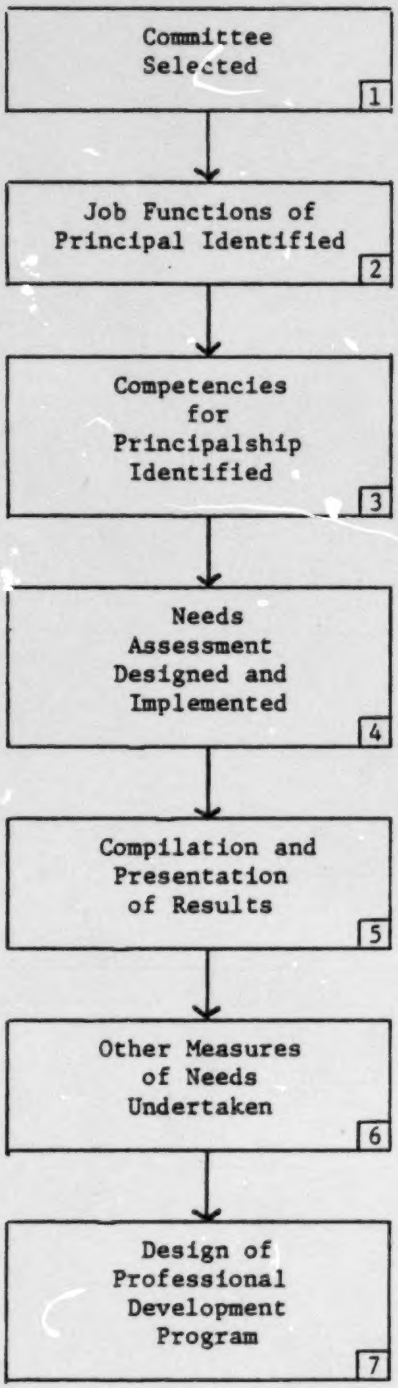


Figure 1

Professional Development Model for the School Principalship

4. An individual, either the assistant superintendent of personnel in larger districts or the superintendent in smaller systems will be assigned to oversee the project.
5. An outside consultant, with content and process expertise, will be an important member of the committee.

In the following pages, each part of the model is discussed in detail.

1. Selection of Committee

It will be important first, to examine the purposes of the committee so that optimum size and membership qualifications can be determined. Specific tasks performed by the committee in overseeing the assessment of professional development needs may vary according to situational needs. However, it is important that committee members possess expertise in job analysis and in functions and competencies of the principalship.

An examination of the role of the principal shows that ". . . the principalship has been classified as a position of middle management because of its administrative responsibilities to the chief school officer and to the teaching staff."[5] This characteristic of the position indicates that the expected performance of the principal is affected by the performance and expectations of those who are both above and below that position in the hierarchy. It is, therefore, essential that the committee be representative of varying points of view relevant to the position. It is also essential that this representativeness reflect viewpoints relative to local expectations for principals.

The need for representation of varied points of view must be carefully balanced against the need to maintain committee size at a level which promotes effectiveness. Knowles claims that "the ideal situation is to have a group

which is small enough for all participants to be involved in every aspect of planning every phase . . . ."[6] Studies of committee effectiveness have shown the optimum membership size to be five.[7] Thus, the criteria for selecting such a committee would be as follows: be representative of varying points of view relevant to the local expectations for performance of the principalship; possess knowledge of job functions; possess some expertise relevant to competency identification and research procedures; and consist of five members. An example of the kind of committee that could be appointed is as follows: assistant superintendent of personnel; member of the board of education with relevant expertise; a experienced school principal; an experienced teacher; and a professor of educational administration with relevant expertise and experience.

2. Identification of Job Functions of Principal

Literature relevant to both the role of the principal and the role of middle managers is examined to identify broad job function. The outcome is to be a list containing five to ten broad job functions which have been identified as being relevant to the performance expectations for principals.

The task or functional approach to administration analyzes what it is that a principal does and typically groups these tasks according to the following: the instructional program; staff personnel; student personnel; financial and physical resources; and school-community relations.[8] Findings and prescriptions describing the model tasks of school principals have been generally consistent over time and there are many examples of this approach in the literature.[9] School organizations are still largely structured on a functional basis. What one is expected to do and what one should do are the most basic of considerations in the analysis of role behavior.[10]

In contrast the process approach to analyzing the scope and nature of the administrative role is concerned less with "what" is done than with "how" it is done. Generally, the administrative process in education is seen as including these stages: planning, decision-making, organizing, communicating, coordinating, stimulating, and evaluating.[11] The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), after extensive analysis of job descriptions, performance appraisal instruments for administrative positions throughout the country, and lengthy interviews with principals, inferred twelve dimensions of behavior to be used in assessment centers: problem analysis; judgment, organizational ability; decisiveness; leadership; sensitivity; range of interests; personal motivation; educational values; stress tolerance; oral communication skill; and written communication.[12] These can be used to describe the principal's role.

The committee's knowledge of the job is combined with this review of literature to compile a list of tasks, duties, responsibilities, and activities estimated to be representative of the expected performance for the job of principal. The previously identified broad job functions are examined logically to decide if they appropriately describe the identified duties and activities. If appropriate the final list of broad job functions is specified; if not the discrepancy is identified and modifications made to the broad job functions.

3. Identification of Competencies for Principalship

The broad job functions of the principalship are examined individually to identify job performance determinants and to decide which are competency based and which are not. Literature relevant to competency identification should be consulted to provide more accurate results. A list of non-competency and competency-based determinants of job performance is produced.

One of the ways of doing this is to present the competency statements under the major functions of the principal's job as determined previously. A sample of principals, teachers, and board of education members is interviewed to validate these competency statements and to provide additional representative statements.

Once this list of competency statements has been finalized, a systematic procedure, combining frequency of occurrence and judged degree of importance is used by all principals in the district to weight identified competencies. An example of this procedure follows.

Identified Competencies	Required for Function No.						Occurrence	Importance 1-3	Weight
	1	2	3	4	5	6	f	i	W = f + i

The competencies are listed in the first column and their inclusion in each of the job functions is checked. Their overall frequency of occurrence is computed and recorded. The importance of each competency is judged on a scale of 1 to 3--1 being of little importance, 2 being important, and 3 being very important. The weighting procedure can be flexibly done. Relative weights assigned the two factors, frequency and importance, may be manipulated to accommodate varying situational needs or desires. The final list of competencies to be used in the needs assessment is examined to decide if it is congruent with the board job functions and some modifications may be required.

4. Needs Assessment Designed and Implemented

Previous theoretical work and research suggest that the specification of competence, as derived from need assessment surveys, is a practical and workable process. Some of these same studies have used, or have advocated the use of, competence as guides to program planning. Webster, by means of a need assessment survey, studied areas of competence needed by superintendents.[13] Laurence did similar work as he compiled a source book of areas of competence based on the judgments of professors of school administration, supervisors, and principals.[14] Treblas went a step farther than his predecessors in studying priority listings of areas of competence in educational administration.[15] Alberto, using a similar needs assessment technique, elicited response from wide-spectrum of people, including government and university leaders, superintendents and principals.[16] Kaufman has provided applicable theoretical works relative to conducting needs assessments in education and recommended that need assessments of administrative competence be conducted within a total systems concept, the results of such an assessment being carried through to the planning of education programs.[17] McCleary and McIntyre have also written in this area and suggested a similar approach.[18] Principals, responding to a model for administrative competence proposed by a committee of NASSP, expressed concern over the lack of identified areas of competence and recommended that they be identified.[19] As early as 1967, Sheehan suggested that areas of competence be identified and put in priority order to provide a basis for planning educational programs.[20] In 1973, Van Meter also advocated the same approach.[21] Pol and Gale used the needs survey approach to determine the real and ideal competencies of secondary school principals in Bolivia as a means of determining inservice needs.[22] This approach has also been used recently in the competency-based community educational administration project

at the Southwest Regional Center for Community Education Development, Arizona State University.[23] In summary the needs survey approach that is suggested to gather data about principals' competencies and behavior is well established in the literature.

A questionnaire can be devised incorporating the data previously collected about competencies. Respondents will be required to make two responses to each item--the actual and the desired. The first rating, entitled "present level of competence," will ask the principal to indicate present performance in terms of each competency. The second rating, entitled "importance of this competency," asks the principal to indicate the importance attached to each competency for principals in the school district. A comparison between the "real" and the "ideal" situations will yield information pertaining to the needs of the principal. The responses are in the form of a summarative Likert scale ranging from (1) very low to (5) very high.

Section B of the questionnaire will be developed from research undertaken by NASSP,[24] isolating twelve dimensions of a principal's behavior. As before two levels of response are required--the real and the ideal--to give a discrepancy measure. A similar questionnaire should be developed for administration to a sample of teachers and central office staff, with appropriate changes in the wording.

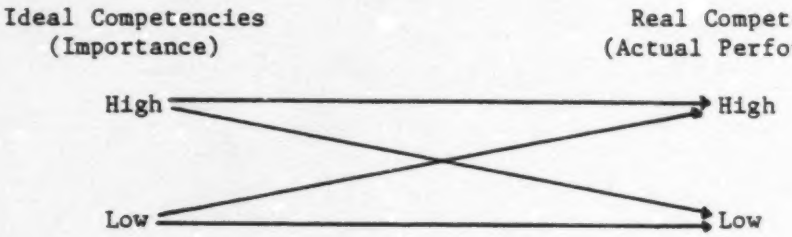
5. Compilation and Presentations of Results

While there are many methods for competency assessment, the approach which has been used in many parts of the country and in several fields of education is the Quadrant Assessment Model, developed by Gaston Pol and Lloyd McLeary of the Research and Development Laboratory, University of Utah.

The first step in the model is the identification of both the ideal and real competencies for the principalship. This has been done by asking a

selected group of people to rank on a five-point Likert scale the importance of selected competency items as well as the actual performance by the principal. Average (mean) scores and standard deviations (or Indices of Agreement) for both rankings are generated; these scores serve in determining whether items are "high" or "low" relative to other items. These rankings are then compared in a logical way, as shown in the diagram below.

The Q.A.M. Approach:



From the diagram we can see that four possible sets of relationships can occur between ideal and real competencies. These relationships are:

(1) High Ideal--High Real: A competency is perceived as being important, and it is also perceived as being performed in a highly satisfactory manner. That is, practitioners possess the competency that is rated "High Ideal."

(2) High Ideal--Low Real: A competency is judged to be important, but most (or some) practitioners do NOT possess the competency. Such a competency needs to be of concern in planning the inservice programs for principals in the school district.

(3) Low Ideal--High Real: A competency is thought to be relatively unimportant; however, in practice it is performed in a highly satisfactory manner. It may be that the competency is over-emphasized in practice and that inservice programs should address the issue of role definition and clarification.

(4) Low Ideal--Low Real: A competency is perceived as being relatively unimportant and, in addition, it is receiving little emphasis in practice. Such a competency needs to be given little if any attention in service programs.

In this study, as ratings are used from several groups, a statistical measure is used (the Kendall W-correlation of concordance) to assess the extent of agreement among rating groups. Only those competency statements which exhibit high agreement among all groups are then used in competency assessment. Low agreement in statements probably means that there is some role conflict, or that role clarification is needed.

The Quadrant Assessment Model, as outlined above, has several advantages over other assessment procedures. First, it is a field-based procedure, since the competency items are generated and validated by practitioners. Second, it allows for a ranking of competencies, so that the more important ones receive more attention in assessment as well as in training. Third, it can be time- and situation-specific to meet particular needs and demands. Finally, the QAM is closely linked to inservice education programs since it can easily identify items which need more or less emphasis, as well as the level of proficiency required. It can also be readily used in sessions where practitioners seek to define, analyze and clarify their respective roles and to moderate or eliminate role conflict.

A similar process can be used to identify skills that need inservice education or role clarification as listed in Section B of the questionnaire. A consensus of professional development needs can be obtained by use of mean score and standard deviations for the ranking of needs. This information can be used to check information gained from using the QAM for data in Section A and B of the questionnaire. Thus a comprehensive picture of needs can be

obtained using this approach. An example of a questionnaire developed by the writer using this approach is to be found in Appendix A.

6. Other Measures of Needs Undertaken

In identifying competence two general approaches might be used. The first approach is to design and test a method that promised to provide an empirical data base from which educational programs could be planned--and this has been described earlier in this paper. A second approach might be to deductively decide which areas of competence need development in the principalship, as determined by persons holding that position in the district. Two methods could be used to find out this information--a structured interview and the nominal group technique. One of the problems with a structured interview is that it would have to be designed and validated before it could be used as a needs assessment device in the school district--and this would be a time consuming and costly undertaking. In contrast, the nominal group technique is relatively easy to use, and produces a lot of good quality information in a relatively short period of time. A consideration of the nominal group technique now follows.

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a structured group meeting which follows a prescribed sequence of problem solving steps. The procedure may be summarized as follows:

1. Silent generation of ideas in writing by participants.
2. Presentation and recording of ideas.
3. Verbal presentation and clarification of each item.
4. Consolidation of overlapping items.
5. Individual voting on each item.

The voting methodology varies according to the style of outcome desired. Items are then ranked to determine their relative importance. Usually a question is posed at the beginning of the process--in this situation two questions could be posed:

a. What are the major professional development needs of the building principal in this school district?

b. What activities or delivery systems would be useful in meeting these needs?

This approach has some problems associated with it. The information which is listed is really a description of the status quo. In other words, principals are only listing their perceived needs and stating their desires. It may be necessary to elicit information from key people in the district who can give informed judgments about the results and make observations, based on a wider perspective, about needs that principals may not be aware of. This approach avoids the criticism that the status quo is just being perpetuated.

7. Design of the Professional Development Program

Once the previous steps of the model have been completed, a comprehensive professional development program can be designed. It is possible to project, in general terms, the areas of professional development that could be addressed in almost any school setting as components of a management development program for principals.

A training program for school mid-management could include the following elements:

1. Decision making.
2. Communication.
3. Leadership.

4. Organizational ability and use of time.
5. Motivating personnel.
6. Collaborative goal setting.
7. Collaborative budgeting.
8. Managing organizational change.
9. School-community relations.
10. Working relations with central office.

In addition, a comprehensive directory of human resources that could be called upon to deliver the services should be assembled by the committee. Instructional materials appropriate to diagnosed needs could also be produced or selected from existing published material. All such material should include specific means for evaluating their effectiveness. The committee should also appoint someone from their committee to conduct a preliminary session of training to enable participants to give suitable feedback about the total professional development program, before it is embarked upon.

Conclusion

A model for the identification of professional development needs of principals in a particular school district has been presented in this paper. The success of the implementation of this model will be dependent upon the skills of the committee chosen to undertake this task, and the ability to design a program which meets those identified needs.

FOOTNOTES

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